

# American

## NEWS & VIEWS

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## U.S. Urges More Services to Aid Victims of Human Trafficking

By Jane Morse | Staff Writer | 13 June 2013

Washington – “Trafficking victims should not be treated as criminals. We must help ensure that their needs are considered and that their stories are heard,” says Luis CdeBaca, a U.S. ambassador-at-large and director of the State Department’s Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons.

CdeBaca made his plea for more help for human trafficking victims at a June 10–11 high-level conference in Kyiv, Ukraine, conducted by the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), which says it is the world’s largest regional security organization, with 57 participating states in North America, Europe and Central Asia.

“If victims feel they cannot trust authorities, “ CdeBaca said, “or their decisions and actions are being judged, they are more likely to avoid these services and the criminal justice process altogether. This leads to insufficient or incomplete justice outcomes and increases the risk that the individual will return to the traffickers.”

Having victims step forward to accuse their traffickers is essential to ending the crime, said U.S. Representative Chris Smith, special representative of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly. “The current-day risk to a trafficker of getting caught transporting a victim or victims is pathetically small. And they know that,” Smith said.

According to information provided by the U.S. delegation to the OSCE conference, there are roughly 6,000 trafficking prosecutions globally every year, but the number of trafficking victims worldwide is estimated to be 20 million. “This abysmal gap is intolerable and we must do everything we can to bridge it,” the U.S. delegation’s official statement said.

Prosecutions, however, cannot take place without first identifying the victims, according to the U.S. delegation statement. “Training for law-enforcement and first responders,” it said, “is thus a necessary first step, as are effective referral mechanisms for protecting and assisting victims and protocols for cooperation between victim service providers and criminal justice agencies. “

Trafficking victims are prevented from revealing themselves due to fear, language barriers, physical trauma or a sense of powerlessness, the U.S. delegation statement said. Some trafficking victims may not even recognize that they are victims of a crime and have recourse, the statement said.

In September 2012, the Obama administration announced a comprehensive strategic action plan – the first of its kind in the United States – to help survivors of human trafficking in the United States get the support and services they need. As part of the effort, communities across the country are being enlisted to provide help to trafficking survivors. In addition, consumers and business are being made aware of supply chains tainted by exploitation and abuse of victims trafficked for labor.

Although the United States and many of the OSCE countries have national hotlines victims can call, a single, unified hotline available worldwide is necessary, according to Smith. “With a single trafficking hotline, travelers and transportation professionals can report suspected trafficking anytime, anywhere. A single hotline will assist victims anywhere, anytime,” he said.

“Combating modern-day slavery is everybody’s business,” Smith said. “Cooperation and coordination are key to mitigating – and someday ending – the cruelty of human trafficking.”

## U.S. Aid Experts Back Proposed Changes in Food Delivery

By Kathryn McConnell | Staff Writer | 12 June 2013

Washington – Two former senior U.S. officials have urged Congress to reform the country’s system of delivering food aid to include local and regional procurements.

“The costs of procuring in the U.S. and transporting the commodity [are] higher than purchasing the commodity locally,” Andrew Natsios said referring to a 2012 U.S. Department of Agriculture assessment of the current food aid delivery system. A former administrator of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), Natsios is a professor of government and public service at Texas A & M University.

“The lower costs and greater efficiency are not the only benefits of the reforms,” Natsios testified June 12 before the House Committee on Foreign Affairs. Reforms, he said, “will allow our food aid to reach more people at the same cost.”

The current U.S. food aid program requires that 50 percent of donated food aid be U.S.-produced and shipped on U.S.-flagged vessels to locations around the world. It requires that 15 percent of the aid be monetized – or donated to aid organizations that then sell the food in local markets and use the proceeds to finance a variety of development projects.

Advocates for change say the current system is both outdated and inefficient, as it can take weeks for food to

arrive at its destination. In addition, they say, food aid that is monetized damages local economies.

Former Secretary of Agriculture Dan Glickman said change is needed for other reasons as well. "While great progress has been made over the past several years to enhance the prepositioning of U.S. commodities to increase response time and strengthen early warning systems to better prepare for weather-related shocks, much more can be done to improve the flexibility of our food aid system," he said. Glickman is the executive director of the Aspen Institute Congressional Program.

"This new model pairs the continued purchase of the best of American agriculture with the flexibility of increased local and regional purchase, cash transfers and electronic vouchers," USAID states on its website.

Natsios said that USAID estimates that under the proposal as many as 4 million more people could receive food aid. He said there is "considerable evidence" that purchasing food locally boosts local economies, supports farmers with more knowledge of local markets, improves housing and cash incomes and reduces the need for middle men.

U.S. agribusiness, shippers and labor unions support keeping the current system. "Shipping a cargo load of food rather than the money to buy food if it is available is the best and most secure way to ensure that taxpayer-funded international food assistance actually makes it to hungry people overseas," American Farm Bureau President Bob Stallman argued in a May 15 statement posted on the organization's website.

However, the mood among some in the food business is changing, with the National Farmers Union and agribusiness giant Cargill recently expressing support for food aid reform, Glickman said.

The proposed change would retain U.S. purchases of food aid when it is "the most appropriate response such as when buying food locally might increase food prices," Natsios said. In addition, many so called ready-to-use therapeutic foods and processed foods will continue to be purchased in the United States, USAID says.

In April, Representative Ed Royce, a Republican from California and the committee's chairman, and subcommittee ranking minority member Karen Bass, a Democrat for California, introduced legislation to reform the food aid program to feed more people, more quickly, at lower cost.

"Modernizing U.S. international food aid to help more people facing starvation, more quickly, at a lower cost is common sense, especially given our national debt. By

reforming food aid, we can reach more people in need, while at the same time saving hundreds of millions of dollars", Royce said.

Since 1954, U.S. international food aid programs have helped feed more than 3 billion people and promoted food security in more than 150 countries, according to USAID.

Earlier in May, the House and Senate agriculture committees reauthorized the food aid program but left it largely intact in the agriculture budget.

The Senate then voted to make modest changes to the food aid delivery system, but in a scaled-back version of Obama's proposed overhaul.

House and Senate negotiators next must agree on a compromise before sending it for final congressional action and then, if approved by both chambers again, to the president for signature or veto.

### **U.S. to Spend \$9 Billion on Global Nutrition Through 2014**

By Kathryn McConnell | Staff Writer | 11 June 2013

Washington — The United States plans to spend \$9 billion on nutrition activities through 2014, says U.S. Agency for International Development Administrator Rajiv Shah.

The funds will accelerate activities aimed at reducing child stunting by 20 percent by 2018 in the 19 low-resource countries supported by Feed the Future, the U.S. government's global hunger and food security initiative.

"Ensuring that a child receives adequate nutrition during the critical 1,000-day window from pregnancy to a child's second birthday can yield dividends for a lifetime," Shah said June 10 at a Washington event co-hosted by Bread for the World Institute and Concern Worldwide. Global nutrition has been a U.S. priority linking its Global Health Initiative and Feed the Future.

Undernutrition leads to more child deaths every year than any other cause, he said.

"To ensure that every child thrives," then-Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and Irish Foreign Minister Micheál Martin launched the global 1,000 Days Partnership in 2010, Shah noted. Ireland's Minister of Trade and Development Joe Costello also spoke at the event, called "Sustaining Political Commitments to Scaling Up Nutrition."

Shah praised Bread for the World Institute and Concern Worldwide for their commitment to ending hunger, for helping to get science, research and agriculture on

countries' development agendas, and for supporting a more flexible approach to delivering food aid. The approach announced earlier in 2013 by President Obama would include vouchers to purchase food in areas where U.S. food commodities cannot be distributed, he said.

Shah said that since 2011, the United States has more than doubled its spending on agricultural research and launched programs to help innovations reach smallholder farmers. In 2012, he said, Feed the Future helped 7 million farmers adopt improved technologies or management practices that helped them produce higher yields and earn higher incomes.

The U.S. spending recently was met by a pledge of \$750 million in private funds for nutrition. Nongovernmental groups associated with the U.S. umbrella group Interaction made the pledge, Shah said.

He previewed Feed the Future's second annual report, to be released later in June. The report will highlight the program's system for gathering and disseminating "timely, accurate data that measures everything from household income to the participation of women to the prevalence of stunting," he said.

He said one of the most significant challenges that remain is continued underinvestment in agriculture by some countries, particularly "in the infrastructure that connects farmers to their markets."

The event followed Shah's June 8 participation in a high-level meeting in London during which he signed the Global Nutrition for Growth Compact, with the goals of reaching 500 million pregnant women and children under age 2 by 2020, averting 20 million cases of child stunting by the same year, and preventing 1.7 million deaths through increased breast-feeding, zinc supplements and more treatment of severe, acute malnutrition.

At that meeting, Shah and the United Kingdom's Secretary of State for International Development Justine Greening launched the Global Open Data Initiative for Agriculture and Nutrition to support international partners in efforts to make agriculture and nutrition data available to the public.

"By embracing high-impact partnerships, science and technology, we can achieve progress simply unimaginable in the past, including the end of extreme poverty, widespread hunger and chronic malnutrition," Shah said.

Nutrition and agricultural development are likely to be discussed at a meeting of the Group of Eight major economies hosted by the United Kingdom June 17-18 in Enniskillen, Northern Ireland.

## Travelers Visiting U.S. in Growing Numbers

11 June 2013

Washington — A new forecast suggests continued strong growth in travel and tourism to the United States through 2018, following a record-breaking year in 2012.

International travel and tourism spending reached a record \$168.1 billion, up 10 percent from 2011, the U.S. Commerce Department said in a June 10 press release. The increase was the result of a surge in international visitors to the United States: In 2012, a record 67.0 million came to the United States, an increase of 4.3 million from 2011.

Highlights of the 2012 arrivals data show that Canadian visitors set a record with 22.7 million visitors, up 6 percent. Mexico was second with a record 14.5 million arrivals, up 8 percent. The United Kingdom (-2 percent), Japan (+14 percent), and Germany (+3 percent) rounded out the top five.

Countries among the top 20 with the largest increase in 2012 were China (+35 percent), Colombia (+21 percent), Venezuela and Argentina (both up 20 percent), and Brazil (+19 percent). All five countries set records for visits to the United States in 2012.

"These results show that the president's National Travel and Tourism Strategy is working as the administration continues to focus its efforts to make America more welcoming to visitors from all around the world," said Under Secretary of Commerce for International Trade Francisco Sánchez.

The National Travel and Tourism Strategy establishes a goal of attracting and welcoming 100 million international visitors annually by the end of 2021.

According to the Commerce Department forecast, the United States can expect an average of 4 percent annual growth in tourism during the next six years, and in 2013, 69.6 million foreign travelers are projected to visit the United States.

All but one of the top 40 visitor-origin countries are forecast to grow from 2012 through 2018 (Spain is the exception). Countries with the largest total growth percentages are China (+229 percent), Saudi Arabia (+191 percent), Russia (+79 percent), Brazil (+66 percent), Argentina (+65 percent), Colombia (+54 percent), India (+43 percent), South Korea (+43 percent) and Australia (+39 percent).

## Global Health Community Tracks Mideast-Centered Virus

By Charlene Porter | Staff Writer | 10 June 2013

Washington — The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the World Health Organization (WHO) and health agencies of the nations on the Arabian peninsula are working together to stay ahead of a previously unknown disease that has sickened 55 people and caused 31 deaths.

The Middle East Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus (MERS-CoV) was first identified in a person in September 2012. Continued reports of new cases prove "an ongoing risk for transmission to humans," according to the summary of activity published in the CDC's *Mortality and Morbidity Weekly Report* June 7.

All the 55 laboratory-confirmed cases have been linked directly or indirectly to Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Jordan and the United Arab Emirates. The United Kingdom, Italy, France and Tunisia have reported cases in travelers who had recently returned from the region, their close family members or associates.

All the patients so far have been sick with respiratory symptoms, and the majority have developed severe, acute respiratory illnesses that require hospitalization. Subsequently, infections have occurred among exposed hospital workers, which "highlight the importance of infection control procedures," according to the CDC report. These cases provide strong evidence that the disease is passed easily from person to person.

So far most of the patients have been adult males with a median age of 56 years, though two cases have occurred in children. Respiratory symptoms were common in all the cases, but some also had fever, gastrointestinal symptoms, abdominal pain and diarrhea, according to the health agencies. Many of the confirmed cases occurred in persons who had chronic underlying medical conditions or were immunosuppressed.

The largest cluster of cases has appeared in the Al-Ahsa region of eastern Saudi Arabia, involving 25 people and resulting in 14 deaths. This cluster was linked to a health-care facility, and the disease caused related MERS-CoV infections of health-care personnel and family contacts.

A second cluster of cases in eastern Saudi Arabia involved five people with the symptoms, but they were apparently unrelated to the other cluster in the region. Beyond these two episodes, no evidence has been seen that the virus is able to sustain person-to-person transmission in a larger community.

In a June 5 advisory on MERS-CoV, WHO reports that the

route of transmission has not been identified. While the origin of the virus is thought to be in animals, no cases have yet been identified in any animal species.

WHO did not issue any travel warnings or restrictions, but advised simple common sense.

"Travelers to the Middle East who develop symptoms either during travel or after their return are encouraged to seek medical attention and to share their history of travel," according to the statement.

Named for the crown-like spikes that appear on the surface, the family of coronaviruses is quite broad, causing mild to severe diseases. At one extreme, a coronavirus causes the common cold. At the other extreme, a coronavirus was identified as the pathogen at work a decade ago when an unknown, mystery disease swept out of Asia. That disease caused a state of near-panic in infected communities, went transcontinental and ultimately cost hundreds of lives.

The very first human cases of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) appeared in late 2002. In the early months of 2003, the disease spread to other nations at an alarming rate, and the global health community mobilized a pandemic response.

The CDC mobilized an Emergency Operations Center, and in a matter of days, had hundreds of specialized personnel working to understand the disease and its origins. By the middle of the year, the disease had been contained, but only after it appeared in 29 countries and regions, infecting almost 8,100 persons and resulting in close to 800 deaths.

## President Obama, Chinese President Xi Hold Extensive, Informal Talks

By Merle David Kellerhals Jr. | Staff Writer | 08 June 2013

Washington — President Obama says that he and Chinese President Xi Jinping shared their visions for the futures of their countries during two days of informal talks in California and agreed that they are more likely to achieve long-term prosperity and security for their nations by working together cooperatively than if they are engaged in conflict.

"I emphasized my firm belief to President Xi that it is very much in the interest of the United States for China to continue its peaceful rise because if China is successful, that helps to drive the world economy and it puts China in the position to work with us as equal partners in dealing with many of the global challenges that no single nation can address by itself," Obama said during a brief press conference June 7 following nearly three hours of initial talks.

White House advisers said that these talks spread over June 7 and June 8 at the secluded 81-hectare Sunnylands Retreat just outside Palm Springs, California, were not expected to produce new agreements, but instead to create a comfortable relationship between the two leaders as Obama begins his second four-year term and Xi, the former vice president who became president in March, settles into office.

The two leaders opened two days of talks with a simple handshake before getting down to a broad range of bilateral and global issues from U.S.-China economic ties to the elimination of nuclear weapons from the Korean Peninsula and recent destabilizing actions by North Korea. Noticeable during brief appearances by the two for the news media was the absence of neckties as the men walked in shirtsleeves on the grounds of the retreat, underscoring the informal nature of the discussions and the importance of developing a personal relationship regarded as crucial for future cooperation.

"We've got a lot of work to do to take these broad understandings down to the level of specifics, and that will require further discussions not only today and tomorrow, but for weeks, months, years to come," Obama told journalists.

"But what I'm very encouraged about is that both President Xi and myself recognize we have a unique opportunity to take the U.S.-China relationship to a new level," the president added.

Xi told journalists that he sees an enormous scope for future cooperation between China and the United States.

"Of course, this endeavor is unprecedented and one that will inspire future generations," Xi said. "So we need to deepen our mutual understanding, strengthen our mutual trust, further develop our cooperation and manage our differences so that we can avoid the traditional path of inevitable confrontation between major countries and really embark on a new path."

Obama said that he and Xi would discuss cybersecurity but acknowledged at the outset that they were in "uncharted waters" because there are no significant international agreements that address cybersecurity issues like there are in arms control and trade.

"What both President Xi and I recognize is that because of these incredible advances in technology, that the issue of cybersecurity and the need for rules and common approaches to cybersecurity are going to be increasingly important as part of bilateral relationships and multilateral relationships," Obama told journalists.

And Xi told journalists that the "application of new

technology is a double-edged sword. On the one hand, it will drive progress in ensuring better material and cultural life for the people."

But Xi added that it also creates some problems for regulators and it might infringe on the rights of states, enterprises, societies and individuals.

The meetings come as Obama has begun the gradual rebalancing of United States interests toward the Asia-Pacific region. "I think both of us agree that continuous and candid and constructive conversation and communication is critically important to shaping our relationship for years to come," Obama said at the start of the talks.

Secretary of State John Kerry, who attended the meetings, has said the discussions on these issues and many more will continue in July during the annual U.S.-China Strategic and Economic Dialogue in Washington.

### **Burma's Trade Union Federation Welcomes Pact with U.S.**

By Phil Kurata | Staff Writer | 07 June 2013

Washington — Burma's Federation of Trade Unions, headed by a once-exiled labor rights activist, has welcomed the signing of a trade and investment agreement with the United States.

A statement released by the Federation of Trade Unions-Burma says the trade and investment framework agreement (TIFA) with the United States will spur political, economic and social reforms in Burma. The federation is led by Maung Maung, who spent decades in exile fighting for democracy and labor rights as an ally of Burma's leading pro-democracy activist, Aung San Suu Kyi.

The TIFA, signed during an official working visit of Burmese President Thein Sein to Washington May 18-21, contains provisions for market access, labor rights, the environment and protection of intellectual property rights. The U.S. government frequently offers TIFAs to countries emerging from dictatorships to encourage them to press ahead with political and economic reforms.

"We want you to know that the United States will make every effort to assist you in what I know is a long and sometimes difficult but ultimately correct path to follow," President Obama said to Thein Sein in Washington on May 20. "And that includes the prospect of increasing trade and investment."

Since taking office in 2011, the Thein Sein government has made significant progress in reform and opening, including working to end the practice of forced labor.

Maung Maung, who returned to Burma in late 2012, said that nearly 500 trade unions have been formed in the past two years of Burma's liberalization.

Maung Maung visited the United States in November 2012 as a guest of the U.S. labor group AFL-CIO and met with representatives of U.S.-based multinational corporations considering investing in Burma.

"Labor needs to be involved from the start. I would rather have workers' rights built in from the beginning rather than added on later," Maung Maung was quoted as saying in an interview published on the AFL-CIO website, Solidarity Center.

Trainers from the International Labour Organization (ILO) and other labor groups visited Burma to instruct Burmese workers in collective bargaining and union organization, according to Maung Maung. "We have already started training our workers on international labor standards," he said in article published by the ILO.

Acting U.S. Trade Representative Demetrios Marantis said on a visit to Burma in April that closer trade and investment ties with the United States will help the Burmese government implement reforms that "will ultimately grow employment and raise living standards."

"Working together, we can create opportunities bilaterally and regionally that will benefit both our economies," he added. "A TIFA would be an important step in normalizing our bilateral commercial relationship."

In addition, the U.S. government is reviewing reinstating Burma to the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP), a move that would allow many Burmese goods to enter the United States duty free.

(This is a product of the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://iipdigital.usembassy.gov>)